

1 *No Presuppositions*

The Major Flaw of Other 'How To' Books

The number one flaw in other how-to books is they directly tell you that you cannot understand the Bible until you have been regenerated. By this they mean that you must accept their viewpoint on salvation and Jesus first before you can correctly interpret the Bible. By encouraging this notion, they are loading you up front with doctrines they hope you would accept by the time you finish reading the Bible. However, this is an illogical bootstrapping designed to deflect you from interpreting the Bible independently from the presuppositions which lace the very same how-to book.

For example, in the book *How To Study The Bible* (Whittaker House, 1986) — purchased in October 2007 at a Christian bookstore — written by R.A. Torrey, he blatantly tells you:

While you will be learning profitable methods for Bible study [in this book], there's something more important, however, than the best procedures. The secret lies in ***meeting certain fundamental conditions before you begin to study God's word***. If you meet these conditions you'll get more out of the Bible, even while pursuing the poorest methods, than the one who does not meet them while he pursues the best methods. *Id.*, at 7.

Then what is this certain fundamental condition that you must meet before your Bible study can at all really be profitable? Torrey unabashedly explains:

The most essential of these conditions is *that you must be born again*. The Bible is a spiritual book. It combines spiritual things was spiritual

words. Only a spiritual man can understand its deepest and most precious troops. *Id.*, at 7-8 (emphasis in original).

The absurdity of this proposition makes no impression on Mr. Torrey. By his own doctrine, I can only be born-again if I believe in Jesus and salvation on terms that Torrey accepts, such as faith alone. But what if I don't believe in Jesus? Or what if I don't accept that Jesus teaches faith alone? Torrey is telling me that I cannot even understand in a proper way what the Bible is saying if I do not have the born again experience as *he defines that experience*. This means that Torrey can ignore any insight from someone who does not share his view of Jesus or his view of salvation. Those people, of course, cannot truly understand the Bible because they are not truly *born again*.

In other words, Torrey is seriously asking me to take the statements in the Bible as already true in order to understand the Bible. He unabashedly tells me to study it with the assumption that it is already true, and that no one who is unregenerate (as he defines regeneration) can give me useful insights or even correct those who deem themselves *regenerate*.

But we will see that the God of the Bible wants to reveal himself and convince you of His nature and of His role in history including creation. He does not ask you to take anything on the kind of gullible faith that Torrey advises. Instead, the God revealed in the Bible demonstrates himself, and then He requires you to act on the conviction formed by such proof, acting in compliance with His revealed nature. God did not deliver the ten tablets via a mail drop, and ask Moses to assume it was God because the return label said 'God.'

Nor does Jesus want you to assume the religious opinion of the majority on salvation is the correct view. When Jesus came, He encountered the Pharisees who were big on tithing but neglected teaching the weightier matters of the Law given Moses. (Matt. 23:23.) They made up oral tradi-

tions that negated the written commands given Moses in the Law. (Matt. 15:6.) Jesus had to battle people's assumption that these people's idea that being Abraham's son made you saved. They called Jesus a Samaritan, which would mean he was not a son of Abraham. Thus, they would not listen to Jesus. He could not be regenerate in their view. But Jesus slammed them at every opportunity for their assumptions about salvation by lineage, and not by obeying the Law as written.

Let's prove now how illogical is Torrey's doctrine that you must start by believing in the Bible and become born again to truly understand the Bible. Torrey's view is highly dangerous. What if I told you to read a Hindu treatise with that same assumption as Torrey encourages. I would be violating every canon of logic. I would not be safeguarding you from falsehoods. I would be essentially telling you to take that Hindu treatise as true to begin with. This is a tragic mistake in advising people to read books of a spiritual nature. God does not need any presuppositions as you read the Bible. Put any such notions aside. *Listen* without any preconceptions. Do not assume that you can only understand the Bible after you accept its truths. Rather, learn to accept its truths and then you will understand the Bible.

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